

The Religiosity of Adolescents at GMT Jemaat Efata Liliba

Marselinda R.D.P. Djurumanna¹, Juliana M.Y. Benu², Mernon Y.C. Mage³

¹⁻³Faculty Of Public Health, University Of Nusa Cendana

e-mail: *marselindarambu@gmail.com, juliana.benu@staff.undana.ac.id,
mernon.mage@staff.undana.ac.id

Abstract. Religiosity includes beliefs and religious teachings, religious practices, commitment and identity, participation in religious communities, spiritual experiences, and the application of ethics and morality, which vary according to the intensity and manner in which individuals practice their faith. This study aims to describe the dimensions of religiosity—belief, connection, behaviour, and togetherness—among adolescents at GMT Jemaat Efata Liliba. The research employs a qualitative method. The study uses interview techniques to collect accurate data and information. Purposive sampling is used for participant selection, with 6 adolescents from GMT Jemaat Efata Liliba. Involvement in religious activities is influenced by parental guidance and social interactions, providing personal and social benefits, and fostering a deep relationship with God. This study illustrates how various aspects of religiosity affect and shape the religious experiences of adolescents.

Keywords: *religiosity, adolescents*

Abstrak. Religiusitas mencakup keyakinan dan ajaran agama, praktik religius, komitmen dan identitas, partisipasi dalam komunitas religius, pengalaman spiritual, serta penerapan etika dan moralitas, yang bervariasi menurut intensitas dan cara individu mempraktikkan agama. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan gambaran dimensi religiusitas yaitu kepercayaan, ikatan, perilaku dan kebersamaan pada remaja di GMT Jemaat Efata Liliba. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Untuk memperoleh data dan informasi yang akurat, maka dalam penelitian ini di gunakan teknik pengumpulan data wawancara. Teknik pengambilan sampel menggunakan adalah purposive sampling. Jumlah partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 6 remaja di GMT Jemaat Efata Liliba. Keterlibatan dalam aktivitas religius dipengaruhi oleh pengaruh orang tua dan interaksi sosial, memberikan manfaat pribadi dan sosial, serta membangun hubungan yang mendalam dengan Tuhan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana berbagai aspek religiusitas mempengaruhi dan membentuk pengalaman religius remaja.

Kata kunci: *religiusitas, remaja*

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Introduction

Each age phase has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other stages of growth. Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, marked by rapid physical and mental growth and development. Santrock (2008), explains that adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, characterised by rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. This period generally begins at ages 12-13 and ends between ages 18-21. The factors influencing adolescent development include both internal and external factors.

Several researchers have found that religiosity is closely related to adolescents' educational backgrounds (Firmansyah, 2017) and to knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors associated with the level of adolescent religiosity (Salsabila, 2017). Additionally, religiosity influences adolescents' moral development (Wulandari, 2019).

Religiosity is part of the uniqueness or characteristics of an individual, reflecting their personality. Thus, if a person is religious, it should be evident in their attitudes, behaviour, motivation, insight, thinking patterns, and satisfaction levels, which reflect the outcome of their psycho-physical system organization (Yanuarti, 2018). A person can be considered highly religious if they exhibit a high level of devotion and practice in fulfilling their religious duties, have strong beliefs, deep feelings towards their religious teachings, extensive religious knowledge, and consistent behaviour in daily life that aligns with religious guidelines (Parlindungan & Brilianty, 2017).

Glock and Stark (Subandi, 2013) describe religiosity as the symbol of an individual's beliefs, values, and behaviours that reflect their religion. Religiosity is the religion believed by an individual, representing personal faith and their relationship with God (Rakhmat, 2007). According to Ancok and Suroso (1994), religiosity encompasses all aspects or dimensions of life, not just during worship.

Previous research has also observed the phenomenon of low religiosity levels, such as adolescents frequently engaging in delinquency due to low

religiosity, as studied by Oktaviani Palupi et al. (2013). Their findings show that adolescents who engage in delinquency often lack experiences related to religious teachings and have weak faith in God, leading to behaviours that do not align with the spiritual teachings they follow.

This phenomenon is also observed among adolescents at GMIT Jemaat Efata Liliba, a church located in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2022), East Nusa Tenggara is a province where the majority of the population adheres to Christianity. The church plays a vital role in fostering adolescents' moral, spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive, and intellectual growth. It serves as a safe and positive environment for adolescents to explore their faith, build character, and develop their potential (Hutauruk & Sinaga, 2023).

Adolescents in a church are one of the driving forces, with many church activities involving them in ministry. First, there are worship activities such as youth worship services, youth choirs, Bible study groups, and joint prayer. Second, there are ministry activities, including teaching Sunday school, social services, and evangelism missions. Third, developmental activities include youth retreats and Bible study sessions. Fourth, there are social activities, including social service and participating in committees for religious holiday celebrations.

This is also found among adolescents at GMIT Efata Liliba, based on initial data collection conducted on Sunday, February 11, 2024. Interviews with three adolescents actively involved in church ministry revealed that they often receive perceptions from the community that every action, attitude, and behaviour should align with religious teachings. However, in their daily lives, these adolescents still engage in delinquency, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and bullying (RJ 1). Interviews with RJ 2 indicated that many Christian adolescents are actively involved in church still and behaviors that deviate from religious teachings, such as frequently using foul language. The interview with RJ 3 found that adolescents involved in church ministry still struggle with controlling their emotions, leading to delinquency. This can be seen in how they act and behave when facing problems.

The conclusion from this initial data collection is that adolescents actively involved in church ministry still engage in behaviours that deviate from their religious teachings in their personal lives. Jalaludin (2002), states that the level of religiosity in adolescents affects their behavior. If the level of religiosity is high, the adolescent will exhibit behaviour towards a religious life. Conversely, adolescents with low religiosity will show behaviour that is far from religious life.

Psychologically, adolescent delinquency is a manifestation of unresolved conflicts from childhood or adolescence. Strong faith and practice of religious teachings are needed to reduce such delinquent behaviours. Religiosity plays an important role in adolescent development, with one of its goals being to build morals and ethics, helping individuals live with integrity and take responsibility for their actions.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method, which, according to Strauss and Corbin (2003), focuses on findings not derived from statistical procedures or other quantifiable measures. The choice of a qualitative approach is driven by its ability to provide a more complex and nuanced understanding of phenomena that may be difficult to capture through quantitative methods. The participants in this study are six adolescents from GMIT Jemaat Efata Liliba, selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who meet specific criteria, including being late adolescents (ages 16-21) and active as Sunday School teachers. Data collection was conducted through interviews, utilizing open-ended questions to explore participants' perspectives deeply. The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis model, which involves understanding the data, coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting findings. To ensure data credibility, a member check was employed, where

participants reviewed and confirmed the data's accuracy, thus validating the findings.

Result

Identified by the initials Tenu, Rosa, Omar, Mias, Lius and Semi, four main themes and eleven sub-themes were identified as follows:

Reasons for Participating in Religious Activities

1. Parental Upbringing

Participants expressed that their upbringing played a significant role in motivating them to participate in religious activities. They mentioned that their parents consistently reminded them to engage in church activities. This was revealed by participants Rosa, Mias, Lius, and Semi as follows:

"In the beginning, it was because my parents often reminded me to go to Sunday school." (Rosa)

"The first encouragement was from my parents' upbringing; they always reminded us to go to church together and attend Sunday school." (Mias)

"I started participating in church activities because my parents, from childhood until now, always went to church together every Sunday." (Lius)

"At first, it was my parents who told me to join all the church activities, and then my friends would usually invite me too." (Semi)

2. Social Interaction

Participants mentioned that the social interaction they experienced made them more enthusiastic about participating in religious activities, as

they enjoyed making new friends. This was expressed by participants Omar, Lius, and Semi as follows:

"I'm happy because I have a lot of friends, so I'm more eager to go to Sunday school." (Omar)

"I'm very happy to have many friends; now my closest friends are my church friends." (Lius)

"I'm happy because there were many friends when I first joined during Easter." (Semi)

Commitment to Persevere

1. Social Acceptance

Participants expressed that the social acceptance they experienced provided them with positive energy and made them feel comfortable within the group. They mentioned that joining the group gave them the courage to open up. This was revealed by participants Tenu, Rosa, and Omar as follows:

"But it turns out I received a good response and was warmly welcomed, so I dared to open up and join in the ministry." (Tenu)

"I feel full of joy and peace, and I also made friends who are full of joy, so that also becomes positive energy, like it's being transferred." (Rosa)

"I'm very happy to meet many friends, and because we meet often, I feel comfortable with these fellow ministry friends. This also makes me feel like this is one of the most comfortable places after my family." (Omar)

2. Diverse Activities

Participants mentioned that they engage in several activities organized by the church. They acknowledged that these activities provide a means for them to develop their skills. This was expressed by participants Tenu, Omar, and Mias as follows:

"The church activities I enjoy the most are youth services or territorial services because they are fun and I get to meet many people my age, so it feels more enjoyable and comfortable to participate." (Tenu)

"The church activities I often participate in are youth services, and I'm often chosen to be the MC for the service. I've also been involved in organizing major religious events, which has trained me to work well in a group." (Omar)

"At church, I often perform traditional dances and tambourine dances; this is one of the places where I can hone my skills. I also participate in competitions during major religious holidays." (Mias)

3. Religious Teachings

The religious teachings learned by the participants guide them to build a relationship with God through prayer and reading the Bible. Participants also mentioned that these teachings encourage them to act in accordance with religious principles. This was expressed by participants Rosa, Omar, and Mias as follows:

"I feel that religious teachings show how to have a close relationship with God through prayer and reading the Bible." (Omar)

"What drives me to act according to religious teachings is that everything is already written in the Bible about what is allowed and what is not." (Mias)

"For me, acknowledging religious teachings isn't just about words, but it must also be accompanied by actions. By doing good and

reflecting Christ's character in life, I indirectly acknowledge that Christ exists." (Rosa)

Impact of Participation in Religious Activities

1. Improved Self-Control

Participants experienced an improvement in self-control when making decisions, such as managing their emotions to produce desired behaviours and avoid harmful outcomes. This was expressed by participants Tenu, Omar, and Semi as follows:

"I pay more attention and am more cautious in taking actions because there are certain things considered taboo, so I shouldn't do them in daily life because they are sinful." (Tenu)

"For me, it's about self-control because there are times when my emotions are hard to manage, but as I grow, I become better at controlling myself when facing challenges." (Omar)

"I feel that my emotions are more controlled, especially during organizational meetings, where I listen more than I speak, and when problems arise, I handle them calmly." (Semi)

2. Learning Opportunities

Participants mentioned that they gained many opportunities to learn new things. They also expressed that the chance to try new things helped improve their skills. This was conveyed by participants Mias, Lius, and Semi as follows:

"By joining the religious community, I feel like I'm always trusted to do new things because of the interesting opportunities, and that helps me grow." (Mias)

"There are many church activities that provide opportunities for young people to develop themselves; we end up learning a lot of new things." (Lius)

"I feel like I've learned a lot of new things, and I've become more confident speaking in front of others." (Semi)

3. Spiritual-Emotional Impact

Participants reported that the spiritual-emotional impact they experienced during worship included feelings of tranquillity and comfort. This was expressed by participants Tenu, Omar, Lius, and Semi as follows:

"During worship, I feel a sense of calm and assurance that God is present with me." (Tenu)

"I feel calm and willing to surrender as if God is forgiving my sins; this is an opportunity, and I feel happy during worship." (Omar)

"I feel comfortable and at peace when praying." (Lius)

"I feel calm and comfortable, and the worries I have seem to diminish." (Semi)

4. Social Support

Participants received considerable social support from fellow members, not only during church activities but also in other areas of their lives. They also noted that this support enhanced their self-confidence. This was expressed by participants Rosa, Omar, and Mias as follows:

"I have friends who support me in church activities and even in activities outside of church; I always feel supported." (Rosa)

"I receive a lot of encouragement from my youth friends and often get motivational words or advice, as we have the same goal of progressing together to become great individuals." (Omar)

"I get a lot of supportive encouragement from my friends. When I feel incapable of doing something, I have friends who always motivate me, so I become more confident and courageous to take on new challenges." (Mias)

Relationship with God

1. Basis for Decision-Making

Participants mentioned that they involve God in their decision-making processes. This was conveyed by participants Rosa, Lius, and Mias as follows:

"I've learned to understand why God allows certain things to happen in my life. I realize that in making decisions, I must involve God." (Rosa)

"I feel that I am more careful in making decisions; I always ask God first if what I am doing is right or if it's according to God's will." (Lius)

"Religious teachings guide me to always consult God in decision-making. What I usually do is pray and read the Bible." (Mias)

2. Viewing God as a Friend

Participants described their relationship with God as being akin to a friendship. They expressed that they often confide in God and share their concerns through prayer, just as one would with a close friend. This was articulated by participants Tenu, Mias, and Rosa as follows:

"I feel that my relationship with God is like having a friend. God is like a friend who always listens to my complaints and concerns shared through prayer." (Tenu)

"God is like a loyal friend; I often share my thoughts and feelings with Him through prayer." (Mias)

"I hope that in the future, I will continue to learn to love and draw closer to God, making our relationship like that of friends, as reflected in God's word." (Rosa)

Discussion

This study aims to describe the dimensions of religiosity, including belief, attachment, behaviour, and community, among adolescents at GMIT Jemaat Efata Liliba. This research uses a qualitative method with a total of six participants. The study results identified four themes: reasons for participating in religious activities, commitment to staying involved, the impact of participating in religious activities, and the relationship with God.

The first theme in this study is the reasons for participating in religious activities. The first sub-theme reveals that participants were encouraged by their parents to engage in religious activities. Participants also expressed that their parents constantly reminded them to participate in church activities. This aligns with the research by Kaputra, Engkizar, Akyuni, Rahawarin, and Safarudin (2021), which states that fostering religious habits in children from an early age is the responsibility of parents as the primary educators within the family. This study shows that children's religious habits are influenced by their parents' religious attitudes and practices within the family. Kaputra et al. (2021), also found that in the Jama'ah Tabligh family, children's habit of reading the Quran was developed when parents consistently monitored their children's Quran recitation and regularly encouraged them to read the Quran together at home.

The second sub-theme reveals that social interaction motivated participants to be more enthusiastic about engaging in religious activities, as they enjoyed making many friends. This is consistent with Awaliyah's (2016), research, which found that social interaction with religious mentors positively impacted scavengers by enhancing their religious practices. This was observed through changes in their religious practices, which were achieved through casual daily conversations,

religious studies or discussions, and collaboration in organizing religious or other events.

The second theme in this study is the commitment to staying involved. The first sub-theme reveals that the social acceptance participants experienced provided them with positive energy and comfort within the group. Participants mentioned that when they joined the group, they began to open up. This aligns with the research by Andangjati, Soesilo, and Windrawanto (2021), which states that social acceptance is a condition where an individual is fully valued and accepted by their social group or environment. This acceptance makes the individual feel part of the group, and they feel comfortable and safe within it.

The second sub-theme reveals that participants participated in various activities organized by the church. Participants acknowledged that these church activities served as a platform for developing their skills. Pandaleke and Panekenan's (2020), research supports this, stating that the involvement of GMIM youth in various activities, both musical and non-musical, fosters creativity. This creativity development is also manifested in the form of youth creativity weeks.

The third sub-theme reveals that participants learned religious teachings that encouraged them to build a relationship with God through prayer and reading the Bible. Participants also stated that these teachings motivated them to act in accordance with religious values. Choli's (2019), research emphasizes the importance of Islamic religious education in shaping and developing students' character. Islamic education aims to guide individuals to be useful, civilized, and dignified in living according to Islamic teachings, and to produce individuals with good character. This is consistent with Nurjanah's (2018), research, which states that the development of religious and moral values in early childhood involves psychological changes related to their ability to understand and practice good behaviour while recognizing and avoiding bad behaviour according to the religious teachings they adhere to.

The third theme in this study examines the impact of participating in religious activities. The first sub-theme highlights that participants reported an improvement in self-control when making decisions, such as managing emotions to foster desired behaviours. This enhanced self-control helped participants avoid harmful situations. Aulia, Maputra, Afriyeni, and Sari (2022) found that adolescents with higher levels of religiosity tend to exhibit good self-control, which helps them avoid negative behaviours in their environment. This is consistent with the research by Aldawiyah and Damayanti (2023), which suggests that adolescents with higher religiosity levels are more likely to possess strong self-control, reducing the likelihood of externalizing behaviours. From a psychological perspective, Calhoun and Acocella (1995) state that self-control is essential for every individual, as no one can live in isolation and everyone requires the assistance of others. To avoid infringing on others' rights or causing harm, individuals must be able to manage their negative behaviours.

The second sub-theme reveals that participants had many opportunities to learn new things. Participants also expressed that trying new things helped enhance their abilities. This is consistent with Oktaviani and Wathon's (2021), research, which found that some students, when given the opportunity, could discover new interests and felt inspired to continue learning and developing their skills.

The third sub-theme reveals that the spiritual-emotional impact participants felt during worship made them feel more at peace and comfortable. This is consistent with Tanjung's (2019) research, which states that Salah (prayer) is a spiritual process of remembering Allah, and remembering Allah is a way to achieve inner peace and tranquillity. Satra and Muarifah (2024), state that, from a psychological perspective, worship can have positive effects, such as reducing stress, increasing feelings of security, finding meaning, regulating emotions, fostering acceptance, and enhancing psychological well-being. All of these factors contribute to the sense of peace and comfort experienced during worship.

The fourth sub-theme reveals that participants received significant social support from their fellow service members, not only during church activities but also when participating in activities outside the church. Participants also expressed that social support from fellow service members boosted their self-confidence. Nurasmı, Maulana, Farida, Tendikati, Sari, Kurnia, and Putra (2018), found that with social support, adolescents from broken home backgrounds felt more motivated in their current lives, without being burdened by their parents' decisions.

The fourth theme in this study is the relationship with God. The first sub-theme reveals that participants involved God in their decision-making processes, viewing God as a foundation for making decisions. This aligns with the research by Gea, Situmorang, and Manik (2023), which states that any decision will be good if God is involved in considering all aspects before making it. From the perspective of cognitive psychology, Suhaman (2005), defines decision-making as the process of selecting or determining one option from various alternatives in uncertain situations. Decisions are made in contexts where one must predict the future, choose between two or more options, and estimate how often certain events may occur.

The second sub-theme reveals that participants described their relationship with God as similar to a friendship. Participants often shared their stories or complained to God through prayer, just as they would with a close friend. Gunawan's (2020), research states that viewing God as a friend means seeing Him as a close companion who is always ready to listen and provide support. In this relationship, one can share feelings, express concerns, and seek guidance, much like when talking to a close friend.

Conclusion

This study describes the dimensions of religiosity among adolescents at GMT Jemaat Efata Liliba, using a qualitative method with six participants. The research identified four main themes: reasons for participating in religious activities, commitment to perseverance, the impact of religious participation, and the relationship with God.

The study reveals that adolescents at GMIT Efata Liliba participate in religious activities due to strong parental upbringing and positive social interactions, which together reinforce their motivation to engage in church activities. Their commitment is influenced by the positive energy from social acceptance, the personal development benefits gained through church activities, and the encouragement from religious teachings to build a relationship with God and act according to religious values. The impact of religious participation includes increased self-control, opportunities to learn new things, emotional peace from worship, and social support that boosts self-confidence. Additionally, participants involve God in their decision-making and view their relationship with God as a friendship, where they share feelings and seek guidance.

Overall, involvement in religious activities is influenced by parental and social interactions, providing personal and social benefits, and fostering a deep relationship with God. This study highlights how various aspects of religiosity influence and shape the religious experiences of adolescents.

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